The History of the Jamestown Colony: Seventeenth-Century and Modern Interpretations

A Senior Honors Thesis

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Introduction

Reevaluating Jamestown

On an unexceptional day in December about four hundred years ago, three small ships embarked from an English dock and began the long and treacherous voyage across the Atlantic. The passengers on board envisioned their goals – wealth and discovery, glory and destiny. The promise of a new life hung tantalizingly ahead of them. When they arrived in their new world in May of the next year, they did not know that they were to begin the journey of a nation that would eventually become the United States of America.

This summary sounds almost ridiculously idealistic – dream-driven achievers setting out to start over and build for themselves a better world. To the average American citizen, this story appears to be the classic description of the Pilgrims coming to the new world in 1620 seeking religious freedom. But what would the same average American citizen say to the fact that this deceptively idealistic story actually took place almost fourteen years earlier at Jamestown, Virginia? The unfortunate truth is that most people do not know the story of the Jamestown colony, established in 1607.[1]

Even when people have heard of Jamestown, often it is with a negative connotation. Common knowledge marginally recognizes Jamestown as the colony that predates the Separatists in New England by more than a dozen years, and as the first permanent English settlement in America. However, historical precedence does not equal historical value, and the value of Jamestown has to be searched for with significantly more effort. The 1607 colony has a

[1] There is a reason I can make this assertion with confidence. I had the opportunity to participate in the archaeology at Jamestown for six weeks in the summer of 2008, and during that time I was able to talk with dozens of tourists. I was appalled by the fact that I was continually asked, "Where were the Pilgrims living? Where is your reproduction of the Mayflower? Did they have the First Thanksgiving here?" The repetition of questions like these is what prompted me to research the history of Jamestown and its reputation.

lasting image problem, one that has endured through almost four centuries and, despite some scholars' best efforts at highlighting the truth of the story, it still has bad press today. One book, published in 2007, says of the founding of Jamestown, "The overburdened streets of London were scraped of thousands of English men, women, and children, mostly poor, who were shoveled into the insatiable engine of torment that was Jamestown…."[2] The book goes on to depict Jamestown as a "tiny profane death-haunted European outpost" and as a "mostly male-occupied stockade with no history, no culture, and no civic pride."[3]

Harsh depictions such as these are not the exception when dealing with the historical portrayal of Jamestown. More often than not, they are the rule. Historians have, in general, narrowly focused on the multiple problems that the early colony experienced and the times in which it escaped defeat by a thread. The same four criticisms seem to surface over and over: the colony was established in the poorest location possible – marshy, insect-infested, and without fresh water; the colonists were so inept and clueless in their dealings with the natives that constant warfare added to their other sorrows; the colonists were also lazy fops, unable to feed themselves or engage in any labor even in the interests of self-preservation; and the death toll on the island was catastrophic and resulted in an unprecedented level of savagery.[4]

These four characteristics, if taken together, make the Jamestown story look very bleak indeed. The first major criticism of the colony is that of the choice of location. The expanses of marshland directly below the higher ground on the island are the primary culprit behind this criticism.[5] The contention is that the swampy, low-lying nature of the spot created a breeding ground for mosquitoes and other insects, and thus, functioned also as an unhealthful breeding

[2] Tim Hashaw, *The Birth of Black America* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2007), 110.
[3] Ibid., 110-111.
[4] Kieran Doherty, *Sea Venture: Shipwreck, Survival, and the Salvation of the First English Colony in the New World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007), 7-8.
[5] William M. Kelso, *Jamestown: The Buried Truth* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 14.

ground for a variety of deadly diseases.[6] The other notion is that the marshland deprived the island of a good source of fresh water, forcing the colonists to drink either the salty water directly from the James River or the brackish water that emerged from their wells.[7]

The second main criticism of Jamestown is their seemingly self-destructive inability to form and maintain a peaceful relationship with the Indians. Many historians contend that it was through the Jamestonians' own ineptitude and lack of cultural understanding that relations with the Powhatans remained strained at best and violent at worst throughout the colonial period.[8] Why could the settlers of Jamestown not maintain peace with these Powhatans, who, according to the English who had voyaged to Virginia earlier, were a "people most gentle, loving, and faithful, void of guile and treason?"[9]

The third major criticism of the colony is that the further deterioration of Jamestown was a result of the laziness of the colonists themselves. The contention is that since many of the settlers were considered "gentlemen," they were unused to hard manual labor and preferred instead to laze about. They could not or would not work, not even to keep themselves fed and healthy, choosing instead to languish and waste away.[10]

The fourth and final common characterization of Jamestown as a failure stems from the extreme mortality rates that haunted the colony for many years. While the statistics vary, it is likely that over 6000 colonists came to Jamestown and its vicinity between 1607 and 1624, and three out of four of these died.[11] Why did these disastrous mortality rates exist, leading to

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[6] Doherty, *Sea Venture*, 7.
[7] Carl Bridenbaugh, *Jamestown 1544-1699* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 47.
[8] Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1975), 90.
[9] Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe, "First Voyage Made to Virginia," in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 938.
[10] Examples of this idea show up in Bridenbaugh, *Jamestown 1544-1699*, 34; Doherty, *Sea Venture*, 7; Morgan, *American Slavery*, 83-84, 86.
[11] Ibid., 44.

Jamestown being characterized as "a hellhole where famine and illness and a savage death awaited"?[12]

It is obvious that other early American stories, that of the Pilgrims being the prime example, have received uniformly better treatment in print as well as in memory, even though it is well known that the Pilgrims too suffered many hardships throughout their early years in Massachusetts. The goal of this paper is to discuss the process by which Jamestown came to get such a dismal reputation in our American memory, and how historians have described the colony over the four hundred years since its founding. I will argue that the regional conflicts in mid-nineteenth-century America were a significant contributor to the disparity between the stories of Jamestown and Plymouth, which has become entrenched in our historical consciousness and has persisted through the present day. I will also argue that Jamestown's poor reputation is the result of focusing on the precariousness of its early years rather than its eventual success. Finally, I will argue that while Jamestown has struggled with a negative portrayal over time, there is newly emerging evidence that is shaping a more positive perspective, such as the continually changing archaeological evidence at the site of the 1607 fort. While it would be difficult to deny that Jamestown had more than its fair share of hardships, the historical and popular depiction of Jamestown should focus on its significance in America's development. This paper will highlight Jamestown's contributions – its market economy, private property rights, and representative government – along with the archaeological record that is continually changing our long-held perceptions about the colony.

These perceptions have become deeply ingrained in American writings over the four centuries since Jamestown's founding. So in order to gain an accurate view of the Jamestown story, the sources used throughout the course of this research are drawn from a wide base of

[12] Doherty, 112.

historical works. Primary sources from the period are especially valuable, and the Jamestown story in particular has produced several firsthand narratives. This is because the Jamestown venture was primarily an economic one, as will be expanded upon later, and therefore the investors back in England were eager to know exactly what was taking place at the settlement. As a result, the men who played major roles in the settling of Virginia wrote many accounts and personal letters about life in the colony.[13] These sources, taken from the first fifteen years of the colony's existence, will be the principal source of information about life in Jamestown for this paper.

As with any effort in the field of history, caution must be exercised when using primary sources. One necessary consideration is an acknowledgment of the authorship of the men writing the accounts from the Jamestown colony. It is difficult for anyone to write without some type of inherent bias, even when the bias originates from culture or conscious shaping of the narrative. The men writing from Jamestown were in the main from the upper class, hence they possessed more education and status than the rest of the colonists. We read considerably less from the rank and file at Jamestown, and virtually nothing from the Powhatan Indians. In addition, the writers were appealing to an audience – the investors in England who were financing the colony.[14] This fact meant that the authors colored their writing either to make things in the colony seem better than they were in reality, or to make things seem worse in order to make previous leaders look bad, both points that will be discussed later.

Once authorship and biases are identified, the accounts can broadly be taken at face value as the best sources we have for understanding what took place at Jamestown. While other primary sources relating to Jamestown certainly exist, I chose to focus on the accounts and letters

[13] Edward Wright Haile, *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony, The First Decade 1607-1617* (Champlain, VA: RoundHouse, 1998), x.
[14] Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, xiii.

from early Jamestown specifically. My reasoning for this is that since there are multiple accounts written by different Jamestonians, the stories they relate can easily be either corroborated across multiple authors, or questioned based on perhaps a single appearance in the records. This process helps me as a researcher render a more accurate picture of what happened in the early years of the colony.

In order to supplement the Jamestown accounts, a variety of secondary sources were analyzed in this paper in order to understand how Jamestown has been viewed over four centuries. A selection of scholarly books and articles, newspaper articles, school textbooks, and website content are all considered. Obviously, not every single source pertaining to Jamestown can be looked at in a study of this size, because there is four hundred years' worth of writing on the colony to wade through. Consequently, I had to form a list of criteria to use in choosing sources. One of these criteria was prominence throughout the historical literature. For example, if a source showed up repeatedly in multiple bibliographies, it was included in this study. A second criterion was the authority of a source. Some sources are considered authoritative works by historians, so I consulted with several historians in order to find out which sources I should look at for a given time period. Using primarily these two criteria – prominence and authority – I was able to create my sample, comprising approximately sixty secondary sources.

My goal in studying these chosen sources is to understand broadly how people have written and thought about the Jamestown colony since its founding. The main focus of this research is how the colony was depicted during the seventeenth century and its portrayal in contemporary historical accounts. This focus will hopefully produce a comparison of how Jamestown was treated in the primary sources at the time of its settlement, and how scholars have treated it in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In this way, the changes and trends in

the telling of the Jamestown story will be explored and the continuity of the criticisms will be highlighted. Of course, in order to get a fair view across time, a few sources from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will be looked at as well, chosen, again, for their prominence and status as authoritative works. These centuries will just not be the principal focus of the research that went into this paper.

Jamestown's reputation and the actuality of the colony's history often present two different stories. The settlers who chose to stake their claim on the little island in the Chesapeake *did* suffer a good deal. Circumstances and timing rarely went in their favor. If this were not enough, historians since the seventeenth century seem to have cemented the colony in our collective memory as little more than a colossal failure. Yet Jamestown did not fail; on the contrary, it was the first English settlement to remain perpetually active on the North American continent. Moreover, Jamestown achieved some significant milestones in United States history. While Jamestown may be generally considered a failure, the evidence we have and the legacy the colony has left say quite the opposite.

After this introduction, the first chapter will describe the story of Jamestown's foundation to 1619 as the author has been able to make sense of it, utilizing the firsthand accounts and reconciling many of the secondary retellings of the Jamestown story. The second chapter then will focus on historiography – what historians have said about Jamestown in the seventeenth through the twenty-first centuries. This chapter will begin to give an answer to the mystery as to why Jamestown has such a poor reputation, particularly compared to "success stories" like Plymouth; it will also propose some ideas based in research for why Jamestown struggled so much. The third chapter will highlight the historical importance of Jamestown and some of the achievements that took place there, and in particular it will detail the archaeological evidence

that is influencing and altering the traditionally negative views of Jamestown. This will lead directly into the conclusion, which will discuss the 400th anniversary celebration that took place at Jamestown in 2007, and what that might portend for Jamestown's future.

Chapter One

The Jamestown Story

The quiet spit of land now called Jamestown Island is one of those rare places where visitors today can sense a deeply similar experience to that of their forebears who crossed the Atlantic to the same spot four hundred years earlier. The island is peaceful, silent, almost eerie in its lonely beauty. The waves of the James River lap gently along the seawall, built at the turn of the century to prevent the shoreline from continuing to erode. Osprey and eagles circle overhead, sometimes elegantly swooping down to pluck a fish from the water. The tall reeds of the marsh whistle plaintively in the river breeze. The ruined brick church tower stands as the last aboveground remainder of the original settlement. The close proximity to nature and the lack of many modern intrusions allows today's visitor to feel the haunting sensation of a place that has experienced both tragedy and triumph.

The origins of the Jamestown colony can be traced to the economic crisis that England was experiencing near the turn of the seventeenth century. With hopes of finding monetary gain in new outlets, and therefore being able to compete internationally with the Spanish and French, the Virginia Company was established with branches in London and Plymouth. The Virginia Company was a joint-stock venture, meaning that its investors owned a portion of the company and hoped to get a considerable return once the Company managed to secure a foothold in the new world.[15] A successful colony would mean a business boost for England and relief of its swollen population.[16] Investors were eager to risk their money, for the idea of a colony in the

[15] Edward Wright Haile, *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony, The First Decade 1607-1617* (Champlain, VA: RoundHouse, 1998), 14.
[16] Wesley Frank Craven, *Dissolution of the Virginia Company: The Failure of a Colonial Experiment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), 24.

new world was promising. The investors had many different hopes – the discovery of precious metals; a water passage to the Indies; friendly and beneficial trade with the natives; and the labor of the colonists themselves in the production of marketable commodities.[17]

In short, the venture was primarily an economic one. Those who would be sent to the colony were not intended to be farmers, but rather adventurers who would explore the land, chart its territories, and exploit its resources in order to turn a profit.[18] Additionally, the entire system of the colony was set up so that the colonists would not have to initially rely upon themselves for food. Rather the goal was that they immediately establish trade relations with the Indians and be continuously supplied by them during the settlement's early years.[19] This goal is evident in the royal charter issued by King James I approving this plan on April 10, 1606 – "In all your passages you must have great care not to offend the naturals, if you can eschew it; and employ some few of your company to trade with them for corn and other lasting victuals…"[20] James' charter granted the Virginia Company of both London and Plymouth permission to establish colonies in the new world.[21]

In the pages that follow, I will briefly trace Jamestown's development as a settlement from its establishment in the spring of 1607 through the first meeting of its representative government in 1619. There are roughly two periods within this time frame. The first is 1607-1610, which I view as the critical period for the colony. This was a time in which virtually every

[17] Craven, *Dissolution*, 28-29.
[18] Bly Straube, unpublished lecture (Jamestown, Virginia, June 13, 2008). In many of the early accounts and letters written from Jamestown, the colonists spoke of their efforts at discovering resources and commodities in the new world that would create a supportable market economy. For example, Gabriel Archer wrote of the richness of the land, prompting him to say, "I know not what can be expected from a commonwealth that either this land affords not or may soon yield." Gabriel Archer, "The description of the now-discovered river and country of Virginia, with the likelihood of ensuing riches by England's aid and industry (1607)," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 121. Note how even the title Archer gave to this writing indicates the colonists' goal of bringing riches to their mother country.
[19] Ibid.
[20] "Instructions given by way of advice, by us whom it hath pleased the King's majesty to appoint of the council for the intended voyage to Virginia, to be observed by those captains and company which are sent at this present to plant there (1606)," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 21.
[21] Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 14.

decision made at the newborn settlement could have had disastrous ramifications. Even as it was, most aspects of the colony were in a constant and unpredictable state of flux during this time, particularly regarding relations with the Powhatans, the economy, and the health of the colonists. The second and longer period from 1611-1619 was a time in which things began to gradually and consistently improve for the colony in the long term. This was generally true for relations with the natives, the stabilizing of the economy, the establishment of permanent family structures, and a steady decrease in mortality rates. These are some of the aspects of the colony's development that will be considered in the following summary of Jamestown's early history.

Shortly after the promulgation of James I's charter, three ships, the *Susan Constant*, the *Godspeed*, and the *Discovery*, weighed anchor from Blackwall, a port just outside of London. On board were 144 men and boys from a wide variety of careers and social classes.[22] The leaders of the expedition were as diverse as the men themselves. The hardened sailor Christopher Newport, the brilliant adventurer Bartholomew Gosnold, the enigmatic John Ratcliffe, the upper class gentlemen Edward Maria Wingfield and George Percy, and the daring young John Smith were all meant to help guide the new colony.[23] The crew experienced an arduous voyage, lasting over four months. But the weary travelers met a glorious springtime in Virginia when they entered the Chesapeake Bay at Cape Henry on April 29, 1607, and planted a cross there to symbolize the arrival of English civilization in this beautiful but untamed country.[24] To the English eyes, Virginia held some resemblance to a paradise. The majestic

[22] Estimates vary for the exact number of men who arrived in Virginia, but 104 appears to be the consensus based on the two incomplete lists in existence. John Smith, "The General History: The Third Book (1612)," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 227-229; James Horn, *A Land as God Made It: Jamestown and the Birth of America* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 40, 298.
[23] Ibid.
[24] George Percy, "Observations gathered out of a discourse of the plantation of the southern colony in Virginia by the English (1607)," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 91.

forests and variety of animal life made it appear as if "in all the world the like abundance is not to be found," as one sailor who had voyaged to Virginia some years earlier had worded it.[25] One of the colonists on the Virginia Company expedition seconded these thoughts when he said, "Such a bay, a river, and a land did never the eye of man behold…Now is the King's Majesty offered the most stately, rich kingdom in the world."[26]

With such positive hopes surely filling their hearts, the colonists continued upriver and eventually settled on their chosen location, which they appropriately named Jamestown after the king who had sponsored them. The Virginia Company charter had ordered the colonists to choose a "safe port in the entrance of some navigable river" that would be easily defensible.[27] The concern was not only the natives, but also the ever-looming threat of the Spanish. The Virginia Company had valid reasons to fear that the Spanish would attempt to overthrow the English presence in the new world. Pedro de Zuñiga, the Spanish ambassador to England, corresponded regularly with his own king and encouraged him to "quickly command the extirpation of these insolents."[28] The charter recognized the dangers of potential enemies, expressing concern that "except it [the colony] be in some island that is strong by nature, an enemy that may approach you on even ground may easily pull you out."[29]

Conveniently enough, Jamestown Island satisfied all of these prerequisites for the location of the settlement. The island provided expansive views both up and down the river, enabling the Englishmen to easily watch for any enemies who might approach by water, and it

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[25] Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe, "The First Voyage Made to Virginia," in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature (*New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 936.
[26] William Brewster, "Letter from Virginia (1607)," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 127. Within a few weeks of this letter being sent with Christopher Newport back to England, the author, William Brewster, died at Jamestown during the deadly summer of 1607.
[27] Ed Southern, ed., *The Jamestown Adventure: Accounts of the Virginia Colony, 1605-1614* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, 2004), 9.
[28] Philip L. Barbour, ed., *The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter 1606-1609* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 260.
[29] Southern, *Jamestown Adventure*, 9.

featured high ridges of land ideal for construction of a fort.[30] Additionally, the channel of the James River was deep almost all the way up to the shore, allowing the men to moor the ships right to the large trees on the land. This made embarking from and unloading the ships considerably easier. These were clear advantages that apparently outweighed any potential problems with the expanses of marshland directly below the higher ground on the island.[31]

The new settlers set to work immediately. Some began building the fort, in the triangular style popular at the time, while others including John Smith and Christopher Newport traveled upriver to explore the land and make contact with the natives.[32] William Strachey in 1612 wrote that Jamestown lay within the dominion of a "great king" of the natives, called Powhatan – "In these provinces where we are, we may well say how this tract or portion of land, which we call Virginia Britannia, by the inhabitants as aforesaid Tsenacommacah…."[33] The Tsenacommacans as they called themselves, or the Powhatans as the English named them after their leader, did not live at Jamestown at that time, but the site remained within their jurisdiction. Smith and Newport's river venture appeared to be a success, despite the fact that a group of Powhatans, most likely unaware of the negotiations taking place upriver, attacked the unfinished James Fort while the party was gone.[34]

At the end of June, Christopher Newport departed for England with the ships, taking back with him some of the exports the colonists had already produced, including clapboard and a

[30] William M. Kelso, *Jamestown: The Buried Truth* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 12-14.
[31] Ibid.
[32] John Smith, "General History," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 224.
[33] William Strachey, "The History of Travel into Virginia Britannia (1612)," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 613.
[34] John Smith, "A True Relation of such occurrences and accidents of note as hath hap'ned in Virginia since the first planting of that colony which is now resident in the south part thereof, till the last return from thence (1608)," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 147.

sample of ore.[35] It was shortly after this, in the depth of the sweltering Virginia summer, that the first wave of sickness claimed the lives of many of the colonists, including Bartholomew Gosnold, an inspiring leader whom Smith described as "one of the first movers of this plantation."[36] By autumn, around forty men survived from the one hundred and four who landed there in the spring.[37] Since the colony experienced a good deal of illness and death especially in the early years, it was an invaluable blessing that several "supplies" of new colonists were sent to Jamestown, beginning with the First Supply in January 1608.[38] With each arrival, these new colonists helped to rejuvenate the struggling colony.

During that first summer and afterward, the factionalism among the leaders at Jamestown exacerbated the settlement's other problems. The leadership issue was laden with difficulties from the beginning, when The Virginia Company selected a council of leaders prior to the voyage and put their names in a sealed box, not to be opened until arrival in Virginia.[39] A president was supposed to be elected from among the council, but when the box was opened, those whose names appeared inside quarreled as to who would hold that higher position.[40] Edward Maria Wingfield was ultimately chosen as the first president, but he quickly generated discontent and was the first in a long line of leaders to be replaced.[41] However, like most other aspects of the colony that showed precariousness in its early years, the leadership eventually stabilized over time. One leader who had much to do with this eventual stabilization was John

[35] Percy, "Observations gathered out of a discourse," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 98; The Council in Virginia, "Letter to the Council of Virginia, 22 June 1607," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives,* 125; Christopher Newport, "Letter to Salisbury, 29 July 1607," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives,* 130.
[36] Smith, "General History," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 222.
[37] Horn, *A Land as God Made It*, 57.
[38] A list of those in the First Supply is found in Smith, "General History," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 251-253.
[39] Smith, "General History, " in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 224.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 230.

Smith, who, though many leaders had their strong points, likely did the best job of all of them.[42] Smith has become a heroic, almost mythical figure over time, but his aptitude for leadership and organization appears to be unparalleled in the history of early Jamestown. Smith endured capture by the natives shortly after arriving in Virginia, during which time Powhatan's young daughter Pocahontas reportedly saved his life.[43] After this experience, Smith and Pocahontas maintained a close friendship, one that certainly helped in continuing the efforts at amiable ties between the colonists and Powhatans.[44]

Smith later returned to Jamestown after his capture and was elected president of the colony in September 1608.[45] During that time he kept the colonists on their toes by operating a strict policy of no work, no food – "He that gathereth not every day as much as I do, the next day shall be set beyond the river and be banished from the fort as a drone till he amend his conditions or starve."[46] According to Smith's accounts, the colonists kept busy during his tenure as president, making pitch and tar, glass products, and operating sawmills along the river.[47] During Smith's governance, the relations between the colonists and Powhatans were fairly stable as well. Powhatan and Smith met on multiple occasions.[48] Pocahontas, the "very nonpareil of his [Powhatan's] kingdom,"[49] visited James Fort often, and many of the younger English boys likewise visited the Indian villages.[50] The Second Supply of settlers arrived in Virginia in September 1608, and with them came the first Englishwomen to Jamestown, a Mistress Forrest

[42] Haile, *Jamestown Narratives,* 59.
[43] For an interesting investigation into whether this allegation by Smith is true, see David A. Price, *Love and Hate in Jamestown: John Smith, Pocahontas, and the Start of a New Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 241-245.
[44] Smith, "General History," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 336.
[45] Horn, *A Land as God Made It*, 99.
[46] Smith, "General History," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 321-322.
[47] Ibid, 279.
[48] Ibid, 282.
[49] Ibid., 336.
[50] Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 234-237.

and her maid Anne Burras.[51] It is evident that in its diligent economic endeavors, stable relations with the Powhatans, and inception of family structures, the colony more than survived while under Smith's able guidance.

Unfortunately for the Jamestonians, an injury from a gunpowder explosion forced Smith to return to England in the fall of 1609 and left the colony in the less-than-capable hands of George Percy.[52] As will be expanded upon in the next chapter, Percy did not respond to the colony's early challenges in the same able manner that Smith did. Percy was in command of the settlement during the terrible winter of 1609-1610, which became known infamously as the "Starving Time."[53] A flotilla of ships laden with supplies and persons bound for the colony was shipwrecked in Bermuda and did not reach Virginia until the following spring.[54] In the meantime, Percy lamented, the colonists felt "that sharp prick of hunger," and "having fed upon horses and other beasts as long as they have lasted, we were glad to make shift with vermin, as dogs, cats, rats, and mice…serpents and snakes."[55] Percy's conclusion was that of five hundred colonists, only sixty were left after the winter of 1609-1610.[56] When the shipwrecked supply ship finally reached Virginia from Bermuda, the new arrivals found James Fort in a state of ruin, filled with "famine and pestilence."[57] The situation appeared so desperate that Sir Thomas Gates, the newly arrived governor, decided to pack everyone up and head downriver, abandoning Jamestown for either a different location or even a return to England.[58]

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[51] A list of those in the Second Supply is found in Smith, "General History," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives,* 291-293.
[52] Percy, "True Relation," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 502.
[53] Kelso, *Buried Truth,* 20.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Percy, "True Relation," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 505.
[56] Ibid., 507.
[57] William Strachey, "A True Reportory of the wrack and redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, knight, upon and from the Islands of the Bermudas; his coming to Virginia, and the estate of that colony then, and after under the government of the Lord La Warre" (1610), in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 419.
[58] Ibid., 419-420.

Any plans for abandonment were put aside thanks to the timely arrival from England of yet another new Governor, Lord De La Warr, whose advance party met the fleeing colonists as they journeyed downriver.[59] With Lord De La Warr's supply in 1610, the settlement was rejuvenated in the nick of time thanks to new provisions and people.[60] The Company officials had sent a variety of artisans and craftsmen, hoping again to stumble across more than one marketable commodity that could be produced in the colony. Lord De La Warr was able to improve conditions by imposing a strict military discipline, the "Laws Divine, Morall, and Martiall."[61] These laws laid out the requirements for the colonists and the penalties for transgression, and finally provided the solid and enforceable leadership the colony had lacked more often than not.[62]

The gradually improving conditions at Jamestown led William Strachey, the colony's secretary, to rejoice that, "Commodities…may be supplied to us in our own country and by our own industry…" and that Virginia was "one of the goodliest countries under the sun."[63] In 1613, a cash crop was discovered in the form of tobacco, which finally produced the substantial economic return the mother country had been waiting on.[64] John Rolfe, the leading instigator of the tobacco industry, married Pocahontas in the Jamestown church in 1614 after she had been kept at the colony as a hostage for several years.[65] The marriage appears to have been an affectionate one, and both the Englishmen and the natives viewed the event as a temporary non-aggression treaty.[66]

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[59] Kelso, *Buried Truth*, 22-23.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 27-36.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Strachey, "True Reportory," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 443.
[64] John Rolfe, "A True Relation of the State of Virginia" (1617), in Haile, Jamestown Narratives, 871.
[65] Mann, "America, Found and Lost," 45.
[66] Ibid.

All of these developments indicate that the colony met its initial challenges, overcame them, and found a footing as a permanent settlement. Jamestown's economy had stabilized, its relations with the Powhatans had improved, and in 1619 the government of the colony attained a better status as well. During the summer of that year the Virginia General Assembly met for the first time in the church at Jamestown.[67] This body was the first form of representative government on the continent, and will be discussed in more detail later. It seemed that Virginia, while initially less than hospitable to its valiant settlers, was finally becoming the colony that would come to have a profound impact on American history. William Byrd II, a prominent Virginian of the eighteenth century, reportedly put it this way – "In the beginning, all America was Virginia."[68]

The importance of Virginia, and Jamestown in particular, should not be underestimated. While the early colonists were struggling and making significant decisions in the years 1607 to 1610, they were paving a smoother road for 1611 and beyond. With each passing year, there was improvement in Jamestown's economy, its relations with the Powhatans, its societal structures, and its colonists' health. These improvements allowed the colony to permanently take root and flourish, opening the gateway of the new world to other adventurers. Given these successes, the question still remains as to why Jamestown has such a poor reputation. This question will be addressed in the next chapter, which will look at the historiography of Jamestown – what has been said about the colony and perhaps why it has been portrayed that way.

[67] "Proceedings of the Virginia Assembly, 1619," in Lyon Gardiner Tyler, ed., *Narratives of Early Virginia 1606-1625* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1946), 251.
[68] Stephen Adams, *The Best and Worst Country in the World: Perspectives on the Early Virginia Landscape* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 5.

Chapter Two

The Historiography of Jamestown and Solutions to the Mystery

"Present-day hindsight makes clear that the Englishmen who first went out to the colony were an unskilled, improvident, and lazy lot…like the grasshoppers in Aesop's fable, they took little if any thought for the future, and as a result, many of them perished."[69] Carl Bridenbaugh's characterization of the Jamestown colony is representative of Jamestown's reputation as a failed colony. However, this portrayal of early Jamestown's story ignores the colony's eventual success. Where did this tradition come from, of portraying Jamestown negatively in works of history and favoring in its place the mythical legend of the Pilgrims? In this chapter I will look at a sample of what has been written about Jamestown from the seventeenth through twenty-first centuries, analyzing the trends and patterns that appear in the literature of each century. Building upon the theses of Karen Ordahl Kupperman and Ann Uhry Abrams, I will argue that the regional conflicts of mid-nineteenth-century America were a significant contributor to the dichotomous depiction of the Pilgrims and Jamestown; and that if this dichotomy is to be changed, Jamestown needs to be understood within the terms of its eventual success, not the trials and errors in its first few years.

Before diving into an overview of the source material on Jamestown, it is necessary to briefly define some terminology and re-emphasize some earlier points. This chapter focuses primarily on historiography, which is a summary of the historical literature on a specific topic, in this case, Jamestown. When writing a historiography, the historian must have some criteria by which he or she chooses the sources that are to be analyzed. As mentioned previously, I chose sources on Jamestown based on their reappearance in multiple bibliographies, therefore

[69] Carl Bridenbaugh, *Jamestown 1544-1699* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 47.

indicating prominence in their field, as well as works that are considered authoritative by historians and which the author would be remiss in ignoring. Additionally, while moving through the historiography, I honed in on the presence, or lack thereof, of the four primary criticisms of Jamestown that appear repeatedly in print. Briefly, these four criticisms are that of the colony's ill-advised location; the colonists' inability to get along with the natives; the image of the colonists as lazy and indifferent; and the ludicrous and wasteful mortality rates in the colony. Bearing these things in mind, the focus can now be turned to the historical works and what they say about Jamestown.

The historiography of Jamestown begins with the writings of the Jamestonians themselves. Since the Virginia Company investors were continually anxious to know what was transpiring in their fledgling colony, several of the white male leaders at Jamestown wrote accounts that would inform those in the mother country about their doings.[70] The primary writings from the early period of Jamestown include the accounts by John Smith, George Percy, Gabriel Archer, William Strachey, Ralph Hamor, Henry Spelman, and John Rolfe. Other figures prominent in the story of the colony, such as Lord De La Warr, Christopher Newport, Edward Maria Wingfield, and Thomas Dale, wrote shorter accounts or letters that have also been preserved.[71] These accounts and others like them have been used by many historians and by the archaeologists of the Jamestown Rediscovery Project, who have read these sources extensively in order to supplement their material findings and understand more fully the early history of the colony.

The early sources are indispensable to those wishing to study Jamestown, and without them we would know far less about life in the colony. There are several trends that appear in the

[70] Edward Wright Haile, *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony, The First Decade 1607-1617* (Champlain, VA: RoundHouse, 1998), x.
[71] See table of contents for Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, xxviii-xxx.

writings from Jamestown. These are self-promotion by the authors, descriptions of the landscape and the natives, hopes of economic wealth, and praise for the colony as a beacon of England's glory and religion. The initial mystery regarding the Jamestown accounts is the fact that the Jamestonians were, on occasion, the first writers to paint a picture of their colony that is less than favorable. Why would this be? One reason that becomes fairly evident when reading the accounts is self-promotion, a trend that shows up repeatedly. John Smith is notorious for boastfulness throughout his works, although some historians are starting to trust his narratives as intrinsically factual again.[72] Edward Maria Wingfield, Jamestown's first leader, wrote his account as an apology for his decisions while serving as president of the colony, and therefore promotes himself throughout.[73] Each man writing from Jamestown felt that his account was the best of all the previous offerings – Ralph Hamor exemplifies this in his 1615 relation when he says,

> "I have seen many publications and impressions of those affairs by those whose books I should be proud to bear after them. But such is the perverseness of mankind, such their incredulity of everything save what their eyes tell them to be true…Truth shall shroud and patronize it [Hamor's account] from the malevolent detracting multitude…"[74]

Many of the men writing from Jamestown wrote in this vein, attempting to make themselves look as good as possible for their readers back home in England. This does not necessarily mean that Jamestown was settled by a group of arrogant narcissists. What it does mean, however, is that these men promoted their achievements, and sought to explain their failures through comparison to supposed worse examples. Because Jamestown had so many different leaders in

[72] Haile, *Jamestown Narratives,* 217.
[73] Ibid., 183.
[74] Ralph Hamor, "A True Discourse of the Present Estate of Virginia, and the Success of Affairs there till the 18 of June, 1614; together with a Relation of the Several English Towns and Forts, the assured Hopes of that Country, and the Peace concluded with the Indians; the Christening of Powhatan's Daughter, and her Marriage with an Englishman" (1615), in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives,* 796-797.

its early years, each man in turn elevated himself by emphasizing his own strengths and his predecessors' failures.

George Percy stands out as an example of a man writing with such an agenda, attempting to excuse himself from blame. His "True Relation" contains graphic descriptions bordering on the unbelievable of the winter of 1609-1610, infamously coined "The Starving Time." George Percy mourned over the "sharp prick of hunger" felt by all those at Jamestown and the "world of miseries" that ensued because of it.[75] He described the colonists, in desperate need of sustenance, feeding upon horses, dogs, cats, rats, mice, snakes, and even their own shoes. It also includes the horrific tale of one man who slew his pregnant wife, ripped the unborn child from her womb, and "chopped the mother in pieces and salted her for his food."[76] What are we to make of this story of savage suffering, a story that has been latched onto by seemingly every historian as typical of Jamestown's experience?[77]

There is little doubt that food was hard to come by at Jamestown throughout its early years. Recent archaeology has proven that the Starving Time was indeed a serious crisis. The bones of horses, rats, dogs, cats, musk turtles, and poisonous snakes, all with butcher marks on them, are strong evidence to the suffering of the colonists.[78] Additionally, the colonists' significantly weakened condition led to outbreaks of dysentery, typhoid, and other epidemics brought on by malnutrition.[79] However, once all of this is considered, can George Percy's depiction of the situation be trusted implicitly? There was considerable infighting between the

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[75] George Percy, "A True Relation of the proceedings and occurrents of moment which have hap'ned in Virginia from the time Sir Thomas Gates was shipwrack'd upon the Bermudes, anno 1609, until my departure out of the country, which was in anno Domini 1612," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives,* 505.
[76] Ibid.
[77] A few examples of the repetition of the cannibalism tale: Doherty, *Sea Venture*, 105; Tim Hashaw, *The Birth of Black America: The First African Americans and the Pursuit of Freedom at Jamestown* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2007): 111; Morgan, *American Slavery*, 73.
[78] Kelso, *Buried Truth*, 92.
[79] Carville V. Earle, "Environment, Disease, and Mortality in Early Virginia," in *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 99.

leaders at Jamestown throughout its early history, and not least among their quarrels was the lack of food and who to place the blame upon.

It would appear that in this matter Percy might have had an axe to grind, because he was in charge of Jamestown during the Starving Time. It would make sense if he had a desire to make things look disproportionately dire, so as to deflect blame off of himself for failing to keep his men alive.[80] This would make the story of cannibalism he related considerably less likely. Furthermore, Percy's description of the condition of the small outpost at Point Comfort reveals his limitations as a leader – the settlers there were extremely well fed on crabs and mussels, and Percy was furious that they had "concealed their plenty."[81] Had Percy been thinking clearly, he might have thought to send someone to Point Comfort much earlier, knowing how serious conditions were at Jamestown.

These possibilities lend themselves to unraveling the initially mystifying predicament of why the Jamestonians would portray their own colony negatively. At the very least, it is clear that personality and circumstances almost inevitably come into play in autobiographical narratives like those from Jamestown. Some of the Jamestonians were writing their accounts with self-promotion as a goal, in an attempt to explain their shortcomings and prominently display the wise decisions made under their rule.

Furthermore, the Jamestown accounts are by no means exclusively negative toward their colony. They also contain a voluminous amount of praise, primarily in several areas – the lush landscape, the lifestyle of the natives, the wealth sure to be provided from the colony's economy, and the glory that would be brought to England and God. Gabriel Archer is just one example of an early colonist who lauds the settlement in each of these ways. He extensively describes the

[80] Earle, "Environment, Disease, and Mortality," 98.
[81] George Percy, "A True Relation," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 506.

abundance of Virginia's land – the waterways filled with "exceeding good fish," the forests "replenish'd with wood of all kinds," and the "fertile" soil.[82] Archer also depicts the culture of the Powhatans with wonder and interest. He describes their clothing, dwellings, rituals, and social customs, concluding that the Powhatans "are a very witty and ingenious people, apt both to understand and speak our language," prompting the hope in Archer that the colonists would be able to convert the natives to "our true Christian faith."[83] Archer was also confident that Jamestown would "tend to the glory of God, His Majesty's renown, our country's profit, our own advancing, and fame to all posterity," indicating his hopes for economic prosperity and honor brought to his country and his faith.[84] Other letters and accounts, in a similar tone and manner to Archer's, also praise the colony's bountiful location, its variety of economic efforts, and its potential as an outpost of Great Britain on the fringes of the known world.[85]

While there were many such positive descriptions of Jamestown by its colonists, the negative depictions like that of George Percy did not serve the colony well insofar as what other seventeenth-century people thought of it. The earliest example I was able to find of an outside party attacking Jamestown's reputation and of someone in turn defending it was "The Virginia planters' answer to Captain Butler" from 1623. Nathaniel Butler was the governor of the Bermuda Islands who spent the winter of 1622-1623 in Virginia.[86] He returned to England bearing a document with the sinister title "The Unmasked face of our Colony in Virginia as it

[82] Gabriel Archer, "A relation of the discovery of our river from James Fort into the main, made by Captain Cristofer Newport, and sincerely written and observed by a gentleman of the colony (1607)," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives,* 119.
[83] Ibid., 122-124.
[84] Ibid., 115.
[85] Other positive examples include letters from Christopher Newport, William Brewster, Robert Tindall, Frances Perkins, and the Council in Virginia, as well as sections throughout the accounts by George Percy, John Smith, John Rolfe, William Strachey, Henry Spelman, Lord De La Warr, Reverend Alexander Whitaker, Ralph Hamor, and numerous others. All of these and more are found in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives.*
[86] Lyon Gardiner Tyler, *Narratives of Early Virginia 1606-1625* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966), 411.

was in the Winter of the yeare 1622," which contained harsh criticism of the colony.[87] Butler castigated Jamestown for its alleged poor location, lack of decent houses and weapons, dead or dying population, and dearth of food.[88] Prominent citizens from Jamestown and its surrounding environs immediately felt the need to defend their colony from such attack, especially since conditions in Jamestown during those years were not particularly bleak; so they wrote "The Virginia planters' answer" which follows each of Butler's criticisms with their own response. To Butler's allegation that the settlements were located in "salt marishes [marshes] full of infectious boggs…therby subjected to all those inconveniences and diseases," the Virginia planters replied that they only settled in "conveniently habitable" places and those "verie fruitfull and pleasant seates, free from salt marishes being all on the fresh River."[89] The planters went on to defend their houses, fortifications and weaponry, and economy against Butler's claims.[90] They even managed to throw in some surprisingly sarcastic humor – responding to Butler's allegation that people in Jamestown were "dyeing under hedges and in the woods but beinge dead lie some of them many dayes unregarded and unburied," the Virginia citizens replied, "As for dyeing under hedges, there is no hedge in all Virginia."[91]

This is a fairly lighthearted response to a man who labeled Jamestown "a Slaughterhouse…odious to ourselves and contemptible to all the worlde."[92] Butler may have depicted Jamestown in a poor light in order to get out of trouble with the Spanish, who would likely have been pleased to know that things were not going well in the principal settlement of their English rivals – reportedly Butler had extorted money from some Spaniards in Bermuda,

[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid., 412-418.
[89] Ibid., 413-414.
[90] Ibid., 415-417.
[91] Ibid., 414.
[92] Ibid., 418.

but after presenting his critique of Jamestown nothing more was heard about the Spanish minister's complaint against Butler's behavior.[93] Even so, as early as 1622 and possibly before, Jamestown had to defend itself against naysayers who gave the colony no praise for its achievements but instead searched for problems.

This trend of criticism did not catch on immediately. The early histories written during the eighteenth century indicate a pattern of depicting Jamestown in a balanced and fairly positive manner. A possible reason for this was the pride that individual colonies took in their own histories during the eighteenth century. Comprehensive histories of America as a whole essentially did not appear until after the American Revolution, at which time the thirteen colonies ceased to exist and became the United States of America.[94] The earliest work to attempt a history of the Virginia colony was that of Robert Beverley, originally published in 1705.[95] Beverley detailed the establishment of Jamestown, and praised the "goodness of the soil" and "very good and firm marsh" of the site, which is a far cry from the criticism of the colony's location that would appear later.[96] Regarding relations with the natives, Beverley asserted that trade was "advantageous" but difficult because both sides lacked understanding of the other and therefore had no rules of exchange.[97] Beverley did claim that the settlers ignored their own well being in pursuit of gold, and that they were unwilling to fish or hunt, and while these are negative points that would be repeated throughout later works, overall Beverley did not construe the colony as a failure but rather argued that it was the birthplace of Virginia's success.[98]

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[93] Ibid., 411.
[94] George Bancroft, *The History of the United States of America from the Discovery of the Continent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), xviii.
[95] Robert Beverley, *The History and Present State of Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), xiii.
[96] Ibid., 28.
[97] Ibid., 29-30.
[98] Ibid., 30, 49.

Several other authoritative sources from the eighteenth century also treat Jamestown in a balanced manner in print and agreed with Beverley's assessment of Jamestown as the starting point for Virginia's prosperity. One is Hugh Jones's *The Present State of Virginia,* originally published in 1724, which also discussed the founding of Jamestown in a fairly positive light.[99] Jones cited Jamestown as the "first metropolis" in Virginia, built in "a convenient place for trade and security against the Indians."[100] He said that the multiple fires at Jamestown created a desire for the capital city to be moved to Middle Plantation (Williamsburg) in 1699, which was also a location "freer from the annoyance of muskettoes."[101] Thomas Jefferson's 1785 history of the colony did not label the settlement as a failure either. Jefferson relied largely on John Smith's writings for his discussion of the Powhatans, and praised Smith as one of the leading founders of Virginia despite his "barbarous" writing style.[102] Jefferson also elevated the James River as being a birthplace of many of Virginia's settlements, and he noted that Jamestown saw the inception of tobacco as one of the colony's primary economic products.[103]

It would appear from these prominent histories that Jamestown was not being singled out as especially deserving of criticism during the eighteenth century, but was on the other hand being lauded as the inception of a proud and prosperous colony. As mentioned before, it is likely that patriotism and loyalty felt for individual colonies had a strong influence on these histories. It would make sense to draw attention to the strengths of one's own colony in a time in which there was no apparent need for a feeling of national unity.

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[99] Hugh Jones, *The Present State of Virginia, From Whence is Inferred a Short View of Maryland and North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956), 16.
[100] Ibid., 66.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 144, 206.
[103] Ibid., 153, 199.

All of this changed after the American Revolution and into the nineteenth century. A wave of nationalism spurred by the Revolution created a popular demand for a history of the United States, and several attempts were made that amounted to little more than chronologies.[104] One of the first and most successful histories of the United States was the multi-volume work by George Bancroft published in 1834.[105] While modern historians generally reject Bancroft's history as stemming from the romantic period of literature and therefore built on inaccurate premises, it was nevertheless one of the most influential works of its era.[106] In Bancroft's account, in whose footsteps other nineteenth century historians often followed, he treats Jamestown largely negatively. He named the enterprise as "ill concerted," placing blame upon upper-crust settlers and dissenting leaders.[107] He went on to disparage the efforts of the colony as "pitiable" and presented all four common criticisms of the colony – the poor location, the hostile natives, the colonists' laziness, and the ensuing death and despair.[108] Without any mention of the colony's eventual success, Bancroft dove immediately into the story of the Pilgrims and dedicated multiple pages to praising their fortitude and spreading of "seminal principles of republican freedom and national independence."[109] While this is not necessarily the first instance of the Pilgrim mythology supplanting the Jamestown story, it is certainly a good example of the trend that is most prominent in the nineteenth century literature I studied.

After Bancroft and throughout the nineteenth century, the Plymouth legend infiltrated much of the historical literature as well as American culture as a whole. A useful article for understanding the pervasiveness of the Pilgrim story in the nineteenth century is Sargent Bush

[104] Bancroft, *History of the United States,* xviii.
[105] Ibid., xix.
[106] Ibid., xxii.
[107] Ibid., 12.
[108] Ibid., 14.
[109] Ibid., 28.

Jr.'s "America's Origin Myth: Remembering Plymouth Rock." Bush focuses on the mythmaking process surrounding Plymouth Rock in particular, but it is evident that the principle is the same for the entire Pilgrim mythology. Bush talks about our national memory's selectivity in choosing which stories we elevate.[110] He then discusses other nineteenth-century mediums that affected the spread of the Pilgrim myth during the 1800s – the writing by Longfellow of *The Courtship of Miles Standish* in 1858, the increasing popularity of Plymouth in paintings, and the discussion of Plymouth's importance by renowned Americans like Emerson, Hawthorne, and Thoreau.[111]

The Plymouth legend's infiltration of American culture at every level continued throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. At the 250th anniversary celebration at Jamestown in 1857, the fortitude of the Virginian forefathers was lauded and the festivities were a "magnificent affair," but Jamestown still could not seem to keep up with Plymouth.[112] There have been a number of ideas put forth as to why this might be, but one in particular strikes me as the most compelling. In her book *The Pilgrims and Pocahontas: Rival Myths of American Origin,* Ann Uhry Abrams asserts that two hundred years of mythmaking existed prior to the American Civil War, in which both Virginia and New England were busy celebrating and commemorating each of their colonial heritages.[113] Abrams views the Civil War as the violent culmination of those same two hundred years of "cultural, political, and economic misunderstandings," and that with the Union victory in 1865, the Northern origin myth of the Pilgrims trumped that of the south, Jamestown.[114] This appears to be a well-documented and

[110] Sargent Bush Jr., "America's Origin Myth: Remembering Plymouth Rock," *American Literary History* 12, no. 4 (2000): 745-756.
[111] Ibid., 748-750.
[112] *The Pittsfield Sun*., "The Celebration at Jamestown, Va," Pittsfield, MA: May 21, 1857, 2.
[113] Ibid., xv-xx.
[114] Ibid., 220, 242.

clearly argued position, and would certainly help to explain why the Pilgrims began creeping in to nineteenth century historical works when previously Jamestown had been given a similar amount of attention.

Before I read Abrams, I saw evidence backing up her argument in other primary sources, including newspaper articles written about the 1857 anniversary celebration at Jamestown. One article from a Boston paper said, "We hope that the Pilgrim Societies of New England will take measures to be represented on the occasion. No sectional or political animosity should be allowed to interfere."[115] The 1857 anniversary was celebrated, of course, only a few years before the outbreak of the Civil War, and I found it compelling that people from both North and South even prior to the war were thinking in terms of a Jamestown/Plymouth dichotomy as a microcosm of their current national crisis. Moreover, the influential history from the nineteenth century was written by a northerner – George Bancroft hailed from Massachusetts, the homeland of the Pilgrim tale.[116] This further supports the idea that during the nineteenth century, both North and South were drawing battle lines not just over the political and social issues that would come to be at the heart of the Civil War, but over their respective origin stories as well.

The outcome of the Civil War helped to cement Plymouth's position as the archetypal American origin story, relegating Jamestown to the background. Moreover, it did the job skillfully. Twentieth-century analyses of Jamestown are the most negative and broadly characterize Jamestown as a "crude outpost [that] survived because nobody saw it as worth the trouble of wiping out."[117] Jamestown's negative reputation continued into the twentieth century because by that time the Pilgrims' triumph over the earlier colony was firmly entrenched in

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[115] *The Daily Atlas*, "A Semi-Centennial Celebration at Jamestown," Boston: March 20, 1857, 2.
[116] Bancroft, *History of United States,* vii.
[117] Robert Appelbaum and John Wood Sweet, Eds., *Envisioning an English Empire: Jamestown and the Making of the North Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 3.

popular consciousness. The 1907 and 1957 anniversaries at Jamestown were celebrated on a grand scale, helping to bring Jamestown back to the forefront of American minds, which will be discussed later. However, the anniversaries could not seem to halt the barrage of negative writings published in the twentieth century. A good example from this period is *The Growth of the American Republic* by Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, first published in 1930. Jamestown is actually given credit in this work in regards to its eventual success, with recognition of the prosperous tobacco industry, private property ownership, and democratic government.[118] Unfortunately, the book also propagates the usual criticisms. Morison and Commager say that "almost everything was done wrong" in the Jamestown venture.[119] They call the colony's location a "very malarial site"; they state that the settlement was populated by "decayed gentlemen, released prisoners, with a few honest artisans who found nothing to do"; and they lament that prior to the colony's improvement, it was "reduced to the last stage of wretchedness."[120] While Morison and Commager recognize that Jamestown eventually found its footing and became a "commonwealth that began to open a new and wonderful life to the common man of England," they also propagate some of the common criticisms of the colony and are therefore contributors to the 400-year trend of pointing out Jamestown's failings.[121]

The most influential of the twentieth-century works that shaped Jamestown's reputation as a failure is Edmund S. Morgan's 1975 book *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia*. Although the Pilgrim mythology had already infiltrated the historical literature and was ever so gradually pushing Jamestown into obscurity, Morgan's book is considered to have influenced most of the recent disparaging writings on Jamestown, and it

[118] Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 46-47.
[119] Ibid., 44.
[120] Ibid., 45.
[121] Ibid., 46.

also pointedly enforced the primary criticisms of the colony.[122] In a chapter entitled "The Jamestown Fiasco," Morgan postulates that the Jamestown settlers "made nearly every possible mistake and some that seem almost impossible. It would take a book longer than this to recount them all…"[123] He repeatedly and forcefully presents the "lazy gentlemen" thesis, portraying the Jamestonians as continually engaging in "genteel loafing" when they should have been working and overall having no manual skills or expectations to labor.[124] In short, the Virginia Company sent "the idle to teach the idle" – a "formula for disaster."[125] Morgan sums up his argument with this:

> "The colony did not work out as the company envisaged it. The adventurers who ventured their capital lost it. Most of the settlers who ventured their lives lost them. And so did most of the Indians who went near them. Measured by any of the objectives announced for it, the colony failed."[126]

Morgan's assessment set a precedent that has been repeated in much of the modern literature on Jamestown. At the same time, Morgan's thesis has prompted responses not only from those who would have an obvious desire to refute it, such as Dr. William Kelso of the Jamestown archaeology project, but from other historians as well who feel that Morgan's claims were too sweeping. A good example of this is *The Jamestown Project* by Karen Ordahl Kupperman, a respected early Americanist. While Kupperman does not explicitly say that she writes in direct response to Morgan's argument, the goal of her book is to explain the "creation story from hell" that is the typical view of Jamestown, contrasting with the saintly pilgrims of

[122] Dr. William Kelso quotes Morgan in the introduction to *Jamestown: The Buried Truth* and holds this book's assertions largely responsible for the negative depiction of Jamestown. Kelso, *Buried Truth,* 2.
[123] Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1975), 72.
[124] Ibid., 86, 84.
[125] Ibid., 70.
[126] Ibid., 48.

our "agreed-upon national story."[127] Kupperman's thesis is that Jamestown needs to be properly understood within its global and cultural contexts; once this is achieved, Jamestown emerges as the formula for successful colonies in the new world.[128] I derived a good deal of inspiration from Kupperman's book in writing this paper. I agree with her assessment that it was necessary for Jamestown to operate through trial and error initially while finding a formula that worked.[129] In this paper I also build upon her idea that Jamestown has to be understood within the terms of its eventual success, not the chancy early years in which the colony's outcome was unpredictable.[130] Like Kupperman, I will argue in chapter three that Jamestown was the first colony in the new world to actually survive and flourish, and that therefore it was the prototype for other colonial ventures to follow.[131]

So where does Jamestown stand today? With all of the negative – and a few scattered positive – works that have been put forth over four centuries, what is the consensus? There does not yet appear to be a strong historical revisionist trend that is concerned with refuting the four criticisms of Jamestown, although some recent publications such as Kupperman's *The Jamestown Project* and Abrams' *The Pilgrims and Pocahontas,* as well as James Horn's *A Land as God Made It: Jamestown and the Birth of America* all attempt to look at the Jamestown story in a new and different light, and in the process build up the colony's reputation. The Jamestown myths often still persist – the history textbook used in my hometown's middle school cites the poor choice of location, bad water in the wells, and lazy colonists who did not know how to farm

[127] Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 1-2.
[128] Ibid., 8.
[129] Ibid., 5.
[130] Ibid., 2.
[131] Ibid., 8-9.

or fish and only came to America to dig for gold.[132] A history of the world by a renowned publisher, Dorling Kindersley, barely mentions Jamestown, breezing by it to show the Pilgrims' "First Thanksgiving."[133] Meanwhile the precedence of the Pilgrims remains largely intact although some historians highlight the mythology and reality of the story.[134] Many sources still praise Plymouth as the inherently American story of idealism – "There it all began, the big adventure that is the United States of America…nice people, kindly, friendly, homely, from whom grew the greatest nation in the world."[135] Although it is out of the scope of this paper to do a blow-by-blow comparison of how Jamestown and Plymouth are treated throughout American history, it is fair to consider the basic dichotomy presented above. It remains to be seen whether Jamestown can overcome its abysmal reputation in historical writings and in American popular consciousness, although a lot of ground seems to have been gained through the 2007 celebration of Jamestown's 400th anniversary and its positive focus on the archaeological findings, which will be looked at more closely later.

In this chapter's historiography as well as throughout the body of this paper, there are four criticisms of Jamestown that have surfaced repeatedly. What has not yet been established is whether these claims have any validity to them or not. The rest of this chapter is dedicated to analyzing each criticism and determining if it has any truth to it. If the claims are found to be invalid, they will be refuted or explained through a fair reconciliation of research and primary source material.

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[132] Dr. Michael J. Berson, Ed., *Harcourt Horizons: United States History, Canada, Mexico, and Central America* (New York: Harcourt, 2003), 161.
[133] Plantagenet Somerset Fry, *The Dorling Kindersley History of the World* (New York: Dorling Kindersley, 1994), 202-203, 214-215.
[134] A couple of good sources willing to question the Plymouth myth are Godfrey Hodgson, *A Great and Godly Adventure: The Pilgrims and the Myth of the First Thanksgiving* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2006) and James Deetz and Patricia Scott Deetz, *The Times of Their Lives: Life, Love, and Death in Plymouth Colony* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 2000).
[135] Crispin Gill, *Mayflower Remembered: A History of the Plymouth Pilgrims* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1970), 188.

The first criticism of Jamestown concerns the location of the settlement – that it was swampy, unhealthful, and a breeding ground for both mosquitoes and mosquito-borne illnesses, and that the swamp deprived the island of fresh water. Both of these contentions have some validity to them. Mosquitoes do inhabit the marshland on Jamestown Island, but the types of diseases that the colonists suffered from do not seem to be mosquito-borne, which will be expanded upon in the discussion of mortality at Jamestown.[136] It also appears that the colonists did not dig a well right away when they arrived, choosing instead to drink out of the James River, which is in fact very salty. John Smith reported that they dug their first well in 1609, two years after arriving in Virginia.[137] One of the greatest mysteries surrounding the Jamestown story is the question of why the colonists did not dig a well until 1609. The archaeological staff at Jamestown currently has no explanation for this enigma.[138]

The mystery of the late well notwithstanding, John Smith claimed that the well they finally dug in 1609 contained "sweet water."[139] When a well was recently excavated at the Jamestown site, the archaeologists tested the water to see if Smith was right in his assessment of the well's quality, or if the historians are right in their critique of its salty and unhealthful nature. Water samples were chemically tested, and the results were surprising. The salt levels were negligible, demonstrating that the marshes have no effect on the water table of the well.[140] So living in a swampy area and drinking from the island's water table did not endanger the colonists' health. Drinking directly from the James River was the problem.

[136] Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 100; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "Apathy and Death in Early Jamestown," *The Journal of American History* 66, no. 1 (1979): 24.
[137] Kelso, *Buried Truth,* 115.
[138] Daniel Schmidt, e-mail message to author, February 13, 2009.
[139] Kelso, *Buried Truth,* 115.
[140] Ibid., 123-124.

While the lives of the Englishmen at Jamestown might not have been threatened by the location or water quality of their colony, there was a potential danger in the form of the natives. The second major criticism of Jamestown is that the colonists hurt themselves through their stubborn reluctance to forge peaceful relations with the Powhatans. Recently unearthed archaeological evidence, such as Indian pottery fragments and projectile points, shows that Indians had lived at the Jamestown site some hundred years before the English arrived.[141] The contemporary Powhatans had prior experience with Europeans, and so were probably not surprised when the colonists at Jamestown came calling in the name of friendly trade relations.[142]

The initial encounters between the groups appear to have been amiable, as both sides seemed interested in trade. However, a group of Powhatans "assaulted the fort and surprised it" early in 1607, leaving two Englishmen dead and harming the newly established relations between the natives and colonists.[143] This would be the story of Jamestown throughout the ensuing decades – alternating periods of violence and peace. Both sides resorted to whatever means they could in their attempts to make their situation work to their advantage, whether that was through warfare or more peaceful interactions.[144] Research in this area is limited at best considering the lack of sources directly from the Powhatans themselves. Reconstruction of their culture and worldview has had to stem from the English accounts, which are often unfair and usually hostile to the natives.

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[141] Kelso, *Buried Truth*, 14.
[142] Frederic W. Gleach, *Powhatan's World and Colonial Virginia: A Conflict of Cultures* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 2.
[143] Horn, *A Land as God Made It*, 50-52; John Smith, "A True Relation of such occurrences and accidents of note as hath hap'ned in Virginia since the first planting of that colony which is now resident in the south part thereof, till the last return from thence (1608)," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 147.
[144] Gleach, *Powhatan's World,* 3.

Even with these limitations, however, scholarly work on this topic has reached a consensus.[145] It appears that *both* the English and the Powhatans were trying to control each other and run the show. As long as both sides believed they had more power than the other, no agreement could be reached on how to interact.[146] The necessary reliance on trade forced the colonists under the Powhatans' thumb, a place they did not want to be though they knew they had little choice. This engendered an immediate and widespread distrust and fear of the natives. The Powhatans, in turn, though receptive to the idea of exchange, nevertheless were resistant to these seemingly belligerent white men and their controlling ways.[147] George Percy testified to this mutual wariness when he described a visit to a Powhatan village.

> "We came to a savage town…One of the savages came running out of his house with a bow and arrows…Then I began to mistrust some villainy, that he went to call some company and so betray us; we made all the haste away we could."[148]

Another colonist, Henry Spelman, also described the tension between the groups during a scene of attempted exchange that went badly. The English gave the Powhatans,

> "…pieces of copper and beads and other things according to the proportion of the baskets of corn which they brought. But the Indians dealing deceitfully by pulling or bearing up the bottom of their baskets with their hands, so that the less corn might fill them, the Englishmen taking exceptions against it, and a discontentment rising upon it, the king [Powhatan] departed…"[149]

In short, it was not that the *colonists* were stupidly unwilling to attempt peaceful relations with the Indians. *Both* sides were hesitant to forge a meaningful relationship. This reluctance made trade, an essential key to Jamestown's survival, sporadic and unreliable at best.

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[145] Gleach, *Powhatan's World*, 199; Helen C. Rountree and E. Randolph Turner III, *Before and After Jamestown: Virginia's Powhatans and Their Predecessors* (Orlando: University Press of Florida, 2002), 142.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Martin H. Quitt, "Trade and Acculturation at Jamestown, 1607-1609: The Limits of Understanding," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (1995): 227-231.
[148] George Percy, "Observations gathered out of a discourse," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 95.
[149] Henry Spelman, "Relation of Virginia (1609)," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 484-485.

The tense relationship with the Indians made the situation at Jamestown precarious. This leads into the third major criticism of Jamestown, that the colonists were too lazy and unused to labor to even attempt to preserve their own physical well being. In this area, there is no dispute that the colonists did experience difficulties in their eating and working habits, so it is necessary to consider if it was sheer laziness or other factors that contributed to this problem. First of all, the voyage to Virginia had proved unexpectedly long, depleting a majority of the goods and supplies that had been sent.[150] In addition, since the colony was set up to rely on trade for foodstuffs, agriculture was not a priority.[151] The first colonists sent to Jamestown were not farmers by any stretch of the imagination, and the nature of the intended settlement did not require them to be. The inception of the colony resembled a military expedition more than anything.[152] Agriculture would have started eventually once the colony was more firmly established.[153] However, even if the initial batch of colonists had desired to attempt any kind of agricultural subsistence right away, it was already too late to try because they had missed the planting season.[154]

Adding to the initial lack of supplies and inability to begin farming was the fact that the mother country did not keep the budding colony well provisioned. During the early years at Jamestown, the colonists depended heavily on goods shipped from England because trade with the natives became so unreliable.[155] As the financial situation of the Virginia Company gradually deteriorated, many investors withdrew their backing as the value of their stock

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[150] Benjamin Woolley, *Savage Kingdom: The True Story of Jamestown, 1607, and the Settlement of America* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007), 101-102.
[151] Bly Straube, unpublished lecture (Jamestown, Virginia, June 13, 2008).
[152] Edmund S. Morgan, "The Labor Problem at Jamestown, 1607-18," *The American Historical Review* 76, no. 3 (1971): 607-608.
[153] Bly Straube, unpublished lecture (Jamestown, Virginia, June 13, 2008).
[154] Woolley, *Savage Kingdom,* 101-102.
[155] Luke J. Pecoraro and David M. Givens, " 'Like to Perish From Want of Succor or Relief': The Provisioning of Seventeenth Century Virginia During Times of Change," *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 40, no. 2 (2006): 1.

decreased; this made it increasingly more expensive to keep the colony well supplied.[156] The colonists were often forced then to turn to their own ingenuity, which was completely nonexistent according to many scholars. These scholars lament that the Jamestonians did not even know how to do something as basic as fishing.[157] However, recent archaeological findings are turning this long-held assumption on its head. More than 200 artifacts related to fishing have been unearthed at the Jamestown site in recent years, such as fishhooks, lead weights for nets and rods, and a plethora of fish bones.[158] So if the colonists knew how to fish and had the tools with which to do it, why did they still have difficulty keeping themselves fed? The lack of provisions again came back to haunt Jamestown. Ralph Hamor wrote in 1614 that, "If we had been furnished with salt to have saved it, we might have taken as much fish as would have served us that whole year."[159] The inability to preserve and save the fish they caught practically negated the helpfulness of the abundance of fish in the Chesapeake.[160]

The colonists' efforts to work and feed themselves were also hampered by an unusual drought. In 1998, tree-ring data were used to examine the precipitation rates during the period of Jamestown's settlement. When 800-year-old bald cypress trees in the vicinity of Jamestown were analyzed, it was revealed that Jamestown's troubles took place during the most severe drought in 770 years, in the period from 1606-1612.[161] The extreme drought conditions would have likely contributed to the malnutrition of the colonists, the unwillingness of the Indians to trade their precious foodstuffs, and the poor quality of the already salty water of the James

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[156] Ibid., 4.
[157] Doherty, *Sea Venture*, 7.
[158] Daniel Schmidt, "Subsistence Fishing at Jamestown, 1607-24," *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 40, no. 1 (2006): 80.
[159] Ralph Hamor, "A True Discourse of the Present Estate of Virginia, and the Success of the Affairs there till the 18 of June, 1614; together with a Relation of the Several English Towns and Forts, the assured Hopes of that Country, and the Peace concluded with the Indians; the Christening of Powhatan's Daughter, and her Marriage with an Englishman (1614)," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 818.
[160] Schmidt, "Subsistence Fishing," 82.
[161] David W. Stahle, Malcolm K. Cleaveland, Dennis B. Blanton, Matthew D. Therrell, and David A. Gay, "The Lost Colony and Jamestown Droughts," *Science* 280, no. 5363 (1998): 566.

River.[162] Even the best-prepared colony, which Jamestown did not end up being, would have been hard-pressed to survive.

If all of these unfortunate factors help to explain why food was difficult to come by, there is still the issue of the colonists being described as lazy gentlemen. This too appears to be exaggerated. There is ample evidence that Jamestown was a busy place, teeming with endeavors from "all kinds of artisans," as one Dutch primary source reveals.[163] Considerable pressure was put on the colonists from the beginning to make Jamestown a profitable enterprise – the investors in London were expecting it. They would have pulled the plug on Jamestown if they had not been confident that efforts were being made to turn a profit.[164] The earliest wood processing in America took place at Jamestown, with clapboards and wainscoting being sent back to England as early as 1607.[165] Archaeological evidence shows that the variety of craftsmen sent to Virginia were all hard at work plying their trades – artifacts have been found relating to the work of goldsmiths, jewelers, bricklayers, tobacco pipe makers, carpenters, and blacksmiths to name a few.[166] Glassmaking was a huge endeavor at Jamestown, as evidenced by the archaeological findings, and glass ended up being the first factory-produced product made in America by the English.[167]

Where they could, the colonists at Jamestown molded the new land to their needs, showing a high level of adaptability and creativity even in the midst of less than ideal

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[162] Ibid.
[163] Emanuel van Meteren, "Commentarien Ofte Memorien Van-den Nederlandtschen Staet," in Barbour, ed., *Jamestown Voyages Under First Charter*, 270.
[164] Kupperman, *Jamestown Project*, 240.
[165] A. J. H. Richardson, "The Earliest Wood-Processing Industry in North America, 1607-23," *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology* 5, no. 4 (1973): 81.
[166] William M. Kelso, *Jamestown Rediscovery 1994-2004* (The Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, 2004), 156-186.
[167] J. C. Harrington, *Glassmaking at Jamestown: America's First Industry* (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1952), 3.

circumstances.[168] However, illness often prevented them from working as hard as they would have liked. The final criticism of Jamestown centers around the seemingly extraordinarily high death rates on the island, which gave the colony the appearance of a kind of slaughterhouse. It is fairly obvious that sickness and death were sad realities of the Englishmen's experience in the new world – the settlers of Plymouth also suffered an intense first winter and experienced high death rates during the early years of their colony.[169]

Mortality rates in seventeenth-century colonies were quite high as a rule, so in this way Jamestown was not extraordinary. Additionally, there appear to be several factors that contributed to the illness, suffering, and death at Jamestown. First was the fact that many of the colonists were sick before they even set foot in the new world. Conditions at home in England as well as on board the ships bringing the settlers were very unwholesome, and a good number of those arriving at Jamestown were likely already physically weak.[170] Furthermore, a recent study revealed that the nutritional deficiencies the colonists suffered from, resulting from a lack of food, created the potential for a variety of deadly diseases.[171] Pellagra, scurvy, protein deficiency, diarrhea, anorexia, and salt poisoning from drinking from the James River are all ailments that further weaken the immune system to other diseases, and have a damaging psychological effect as well. [172] In their early stages, these ailments cause appetite loss, apathy, cramps, and bodily weakness – this could help to explain the "lazy gentlemen" idea propagated

[168] Charles C. Mann, "America, Found and Lost," *National Geographic* (May 2007): 44.
[169] James Deetz and Patricia Scott Deetz, *The Times of Their Lives: Life, Love, and Death in Plymouth Colony* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 2000), 60.
[170] Bridenbaugh, *Jamestown 1544-1699*, 45-46; Thomas J. Wertenbaker, *Virginia Under the Stuarts, 1607-1688* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1958), 13.
[171] Kupperman, "Apathy and Death in Early Jamestown," 39.
[172] Ibid.

by many historians. Simply put, the colonists were often too weak and ill to spend their days in constant manual labor.[173]

A final consideration in understanding death at Jamestown is that the population estimates prior to the Starving Time winter have been found to be inaccurate. Careful study of primary sources, taking into account the sailors who came and went over the first few years of the colony, has revealed that only around three hundred to three hundred and fifty settlers were living in Jamestown in the fall of 1609.[174] This makes the Starving Time look less drastic, and again calls into question Percy's accuracy as a recorder since he stated that six hundred colonists were at Jamestown prior to the Starving Time. There can be little doubt that the Starving Time was a terrible situation, but it is only fair to tally up the many factors that contributed to it. The tragic loss of human life at Jamestown should not be underestimated, but in this area Jamestown was hardly different than any other early colony. The mortality rates were an obstacle, one that was eventually overcome through sheer determination in pushing the colony to persist.

In many ways, Jamestown was hampered by bad luck, ill timing, stubborn personalities, and a variety of other difficulties. However, Jamestown proceeded to become not only the first permanent English settlement in North America but also a thriving community with many other "firsts" to its credit. The next chapter will look more closely at some of these important events.

[173] Ibid., 34.
[174] Virginia Bernhard, " 'Men, Women, and Children' at Jamestown: Population and Gender in Early Virginia, 1607-1610," *The Journal of Southern History* 58, no. 4 (1992): 609.

Chapter Three

Overlooked History: Jamestown's Importance

It has been firmly established that the Jamestown colony had a rocky beginning, one that contrasts sharply with a cherished American tale of triumph such as Plymouth. Jamestown continues to be remembered as the colonial experiment that nearly failed, rather than as the first that actually succeeded. The goal of this chapter is to describe several of the historically important aspects of the colony that have lasting significance today. The economic and societal structures of the colony, the General Assembly of 1619, and the current archaeology at the James Fort site have vital importance both in our history and in our current understanding of the colony.

The first significant aspect of Jamestown is how it functioned as a society and as an economy. My contention is that the colony became a prototype for others to follow, and although Jamestown often operated on a trial and error basis in the beginning stages, once it gained a solid footing it became a model of colonial success that other similar ventures would look to for ideas. Jamestown's society ran surprisingly smoothly after the initial bugs were worked out, thanks to two main ingredients – the innovative market economy and the ownership of private property.

The market economy established at Jamestown was of a surprisingly creative nature. As we have seen, the Jamestonians were exceedingly busy during the colony's early years trying to find a product or products around which they could build a sustainable economy, especially since the search for gold and precious gems proved to be vain.[175] The settlers were not "permitted to manure or till any ground" until they could "make return of present profit" for the investors in

[175] Stephen Adams, *The Best and Worst Country in the World: Perspectives on the Early Virginia Landscape* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 140.

England.[176] Some of the experiments they tried included glassmaking, wood processing, and tobacco pipe manufacturing, all of which had some limited success. The glasshouse at Jamestown had its first "tryal of glasse" in 1609, and the glasshouse was steadily active into the 1620s.[177] In the summer of 1607, the leaders of the colony sent "a taste of clapboard" back to the mother country, and it is likely that sawmills functioned in the Tidewater into the 1620s.[178] Archaeological evidence at several sites in the region indicates that ceramics, including tobacco pipes, were being mass-produced locally during the first quarter of the seventeenth century.[179] However, none of these industries created a cash commodity with the appropriate financial return that would give investors the incentive to continue backing the colony. As a result, many of the early industries were abandoned in the mid-1600s, although efforts to diversify Virginia's economy continued throughout the century.[180] Although various industries did not permanently succeed at Jamestown, there is evidence that other colonies followed Jamestown's example in trying a variety of economic ventures. The Bermuda colony was one, investing in both agriculture and ambergris in their early years and making a handsome profit from both.[181] Other English and French possessions in the Caribbean, such as Barbados, Saint Kitts, and Antigua, profited alike from sugar, wood products, cotton, and coffee.[182]

For Jamestown, the eagerly awaited cash crop came in the form of tobacco. It is one of the many ironies of Jamestown that the king for whom the colony was named hated everything

[176] The Ancient Planters of Virginia, "A Brief Declaration of the plantation of Virginia during the first twelve years, when Sir Thomas Smith was governor of the Company, and down to this present time (1619)," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 894.
[177] J.C. Harrington, *Glassmaking at Jamestown: America's First Industry* (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1952), 8-9.
[178] The Council in Virginia, "Letter to the Council of Virginia, 22 June 1607," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 125; A.J.H. Richardson, "The Earliest Wood-Processing Industry in North America, 1607-23," *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology* 5, no. 4 (1973): 81.
[179] Luke J. Pecoraro and David M. Givens, " 'Like to perish from want of succor or reliefe': The Provisioning of 17th-Century Virginia During Times of Change," *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 40, no. 2 (2006): 4.
[180] Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 300-301.
[181] Ibid., 276.
[182] Morison and Commager, 55.

about tobacco. James I even wrote a treatise decrying the evils of smoking the "stinking weed," claiming that such a habit was "lothsome to the eye, hatefull to the nose, harmefull to the braine, [and] daungerous to the lungs."[183] Nonetheless, the smoking of tobacco was gaining popularity in England, and John Rolfe capitalized on this demand by cultivating a new strand of tobacco that could flourish in the Virginian soil.[184] The first major supply of tobacco was shipped to England in 1614, the initial wave of what would become an economic boom for Jamestown.[185] Ralph Hamor said in 1614 that the Virginia tobacco's "goodness mine own experience and trial induces me to be such that no country under the sun may, or doth, afford more pleasant, sweet, and strong tobacco than I have tasted there…even England shall acknowledge the goodness thereof."[186] John Pory, the secretary of Virginia, agreed with this assessment when he wrote in 1619, "All our riches for the present doe consiste in Tobacco."[187] The success of tobacco soon moved beyond Virginia – tobacco production was one factor that helped the Maryland colony take root as well, again showing that Jamestown likely had an influence on the colonies that followed it.[188]

The widespread reliance on agriculture for the economic stability of Jamestown constituted a dynamic shift in seventeenth-century thinking about the colony as a whole. It was initially intended to operate as a small-scale military-commercial venture based on a system of trade. But now it had come into its own as a heavily populated thriving agricultural

[183] James I, "A Counterblaste to Tobacco (1604)," in Adams, *Best and Worst Country*, 142-143.
[184] Adams, *Best and Worst Country*, 143.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Ralph Hamor, "A True Discourse of the Present Estate of Virginia, and the Success of the Affairs there till the 18 of June, 1614; together with a Relation of the Several English Towns and Forts, the assured Hopes of that Country, and the Peace concluded with the Indians; the Christening of Powhatan's Daughter, and her Marriage with an Englishman (1614)," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 828.
[187] Letter of John Pory (1619), in Lyon Gardiner Tyler, ed., *Narratives of Early Virginia 1606-1625* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966), 284.
[188] David B. Quinn, *Explorers and Colonies: America, 1500-1625* (Ronceverte, WV: Hambledon Press, 1990), 163.

community.[189] This shift speaks to the adaptability of the colonists coming to Jamestown – they might not have found Virginia to be exactly what they were expecting, and it took them awhile to adjust to this realization. However, once they discovered ways to make their society and economic system function, they flourished. John Rolfe reflected on this success that the tobacco industry brought to Jamestown:

> "Seeing too many poor farmers in England work all the year, rising early and going to bed late, live penuriously, and much ado to pay their landlord's rent, besides a daily carking and caring to feed themselves and families, what happiness might they enjoy in Virginia…where they may have ground for nothing more than they can manure, reap more fruits and profits with half the labor, void of many cares and vexations."[190]

It is clear that the colonists at Jamestown did not so much come to a new world as they created one of their own, and in so doing they set the precedent for the creative market economy that exists in the present-day United States.

Equally important was the legal protection of the private property rights of Virginia's settlers. This protection was a primary reason behind the establishment of a representative government at Jamestown in 1619. [191] Jamestown was the first location on the North American continent that granted private property ownership and protected those rights by law.[192] By the time of the first General Assembly, private land ownership was widespread across the Tidewater region of Virginia. A majority of the colonists worked and farmed their own lands, especially with tobacco.[193] In June 1617, John Rolfe wrote, "All men cheerfully labor about their grounds, their hearts and hands not ceasing from work."[194]

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[189] Kupperman, *Jamestown Project*, 282.
[190] "Carking" is synonymous with toil. John Rolfe, "A True Relation of the State of Virginia (1617," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 875.
[191] Dr. Jim Horn, unpublished lecture (Jamestown, Virginia, June 11, 2008).
[192] Ibid.
[193] Dr. Jim Horn, unpublished lecture (Jamestown, Virginia, June 11, 2008).
[194] John Rolfe, "Letter to Sir Edwin Sandys, 8 June 1617," in Haile, *Jamestown Narratives*, 888.

This private ownership first came about with the arrival of Governor Lord De La Warr in 1610, who introduced the idea of private land tenure.[195] Additionally, a Virginia Company policy instigated in 1617 awarded fifty acres to anyone who paid their own way to come to the colony.[196] This was a novel idea at the time, offering land as a dividend on Virginia Company shares rather than money.[197] This idea was called the "head-right" system, and it became the basis of land tenure in all of the southern colonies.[198] The land patents that were produced during this period remain one of the best comprehensive records of the migration to Virginia during the entirety of the seventeenth century.[199]

Other colonies after Jamestown followed this practice. In New England, individual land holdings were significantly smaller than in the south and grew larger only as the settlements at Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay grew as well.[200] Additionally, Plymouth first attempted to utilize the holding of lands in common with all work contributing toward a common shared goal. This attempt broke down after only a few years, and in 1623 land began to be allotted to individuals for private use.[201] In South Carolina, plantations began to be formed when men combined their head-rights and thus gained larger parcels of land to farm.[202] Considering that the legal protection of private property is one of the trademark features of a democracy such as the one enjoyed in the United States, it is highly significant that this freedom saw its inception at the Jamestown colony and has survived up through the present day.

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[195] Adams, *Best and Worst Country,* 112.
[196] Wesley Frank Craven, *White, Red, and Black: The Seventeenth Century Virginian* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1971), 9-10.
[197] Quinn, *Explorers and Colonies,* 159.
[198] Morison and Commager, 47.
[199] Craven, *White, Red, and Black*, 10.
[200] Quinn, *Explorers and Colonies,* 160.
[201] Deetz and Deetz, *Times of Their Lives,*77.
[202] Morison and Commager, 79.

In a variety of ways, Jamestown changed and adapted after the first few difficult years and grew into a burgeoning settlement with economic promise. But with this newfound success came the requirement for a system of government that could meet the day-to-day needs of the economy and society. The government established at Jamestown in 1619 is the third significant aspect of Jamestown's history that is often overlooked or ignored. In 1618 the Virginia Company abolished martial law in the colony and granted permission for establishment of a representative body, which would consist of a governor, a royal council, and two elected burgesses from each settlement in Virginia.[203] The new governor, George Yeardley, arrived in the spring of 1619, and delegates from each settlement were elected to represent their constituents. On July 30, 1619, the men gathered in the "most convenient place we could find to sitt in…the quire [choir] of the Churche" at Jamestown and spent the next five days engaged in the first representative legislation on the North American continent.[204]

There were stirrings of democracy even in the earliest days of Jamestown. According to Edward Maria Wingfield, the first president of the colony, only the arrival of the First Supply in January 1608 "prevented a Parliament, which ye newe Counsailor intended thear to summon."[205] The colonists were apparently tired of having their affairs dictated for them and were intending to sidestep the orders given to them by the Virginia Company. This early attempt on the part of the rank and file to have a voice in the doings of the colony was a harbinger of things to come, even if this particular instance did not amount to anything. The event with a lasting significance came eleven years later with the first meeting of the General Assembly.

The men who met in the church choir at Jamestown during a series of humid summer days might not have known the full significance of the event in which they were participating.

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[203] Tyler, ed., *Narratives of Early Virginia*, 247.
[204] "Proceedings of the Virginia Assembly, 1619," in Tyler, ed., *Narratives of Early Virginia*, 251.
[205] Thomas J. Wertenbaker, *Virginia Under the Stuarts 1607-1688* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1958), 6.

Jamestown was chosen as the location for the Assembly because it was the principal settlement in Virginia and had the only building large enough in which to meet.[206] The Assembly began with Reverend Richard Buck of Jamestown leading a prayer, petitioning God to "sanctifie all our proceedings to his owne glory," after which the entire body swore an oath of loyalty to James I.[207] They then assured the validity of several of the burgesses who were present, and proceeded into the pressing matters at hand regarding the operation of the colony. These included land divisions and inheritance, taxation, the price of tobacco, the possibility of erecting a university, relations with the natives, laws of morality, and a number of personal grievances related to servants.[208] After five days of continuous work, the men were dismissed because of "the intemperature of the weather and the falling sick of diverse of the burgesses."[209]

This first meeting of the General Assembly was not yet the ideal of representative government. In all of the legislation passed in the areas listed above, the Assembly was restricted both at home and in the mother country. They could not in any way contravene the laws of England, or the charters or orders of the Virginia Company. Governor Yeardley, the Virginia Company, and King James all had veto power over any motion passed by the rest of the burgesses.[210] In addition, there were restrictions on the voting bloc that were typical of the period. Only property-owning white males were entitled to suffrage, which obviously excluded male servants, any Powhatan Indians who chose to associate with the settlements, African slaves who would begin arriving after 1619, and all women.[211] These limitations prevented the Assembly from functioning as a fully democratic institution. However, the importance of this

[206] Warren M. Billings, *A Little Parliament: The Virginia General Assembly in the Seventeenth Century* (Richmond: The Library of Virginia, 2004), 141.
[207] "Proceedings of the Virginia Assembly, 1619," in Tyler, ed., *Narratives of Early Virginia*, 251.
[208] Ibid., 252-278.
[209] Ibid., 277.
[210] Wertenbaker, *Virginia Under the Stuarts,* 38.
[211] David A. Price, *Love and Hate in Jamestown: John Smith, Pocahontas, and the Start of a New Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 190.

body should be fairly understood within the context of the time. The General Assembly was vaguely modeled after the English Parliament, and thus inherited the achievements and reputation of a time-honored tradition.[212] Nevertheless, the men at Jamestown were apparently going against a trend to even meet at all – representative assemblies across Europe at that time were not prospering.[213] On the other extreme, the English Parliament was exercising *more* power than usual, leading its members to overthrow Charles I in 1649 and rid England of the monarchy entirely for several years.[214] In this light, it appears that the men who gathered at Jamestown were shouldering the responsibility of a participatory government in an age when such institutions seemed fallible.[215]

Not only did the Virginians reverse a trend simply by meeting and functioning, they also were a predictor of things to come for the nation. The General Assembly of Jamestown was a blessing for Virginia in that it bound many separate settlements into one cohesive political unit; but the Assembly also set a precedent for the rest of the American colonies in claiming the right to self-regulate and self-legislate.[216] The government they implemented might not have been democratic in the fullest sense of the word, but the principle was established that allowed for all of the other colonies to be at least partially self-governing.[217] The organizers behind the later colonies would likely have felt that they had little choice but to extend this same right that was being enjoyed in Virginia to their colonists if they wanted to compete for new settlers.[218] In Maryland, Lord Baltimore's charter required that all laws pass with the consent of the men in the

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[212] G.R. Elton, *The Body of the Whole Realm: Parliament and Representation in Medieval and Tudor England* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1969), 1.
[213] Ibid., 1-2.
[214] Robert Bucholz and Newton Key, *Early Modern England 1485-1714: A Narrative History* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 248-249.
[215] Elton, *Body of Whole Realm*, 57.
[216] Charles E. Hatch Jr., *America's Oldest Legislative Assembly and its Jamestown Statehouses* (Washington: National Park Service Interpretive Series, 1956), 13.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Price, *Love and Hate in Jamestown*, 194.

representative body.[219] The Barbados colony also had a representative assembly that was concerned with the liberties of its settlers.[220]

Even though Jamestown was the first to influence other colonies to create their own democratic institutions, the Mayflower Compact of 1620 is usually cited as the birth of democracy in America, in keeping with the tradition of favoring the Plymouth story over that of Jamestown. President John Quincy Adams was one of many who stressed the Compact's importance when he said of it in 1802, "Here was a unanimous and personal assent by all individuals of the community, to the association by which they became a nation."[221] However, the Mayflower Compact was not forged until over a year after the House of Burgesses was making laws at Jamestown.[222] Additionally, the 1629 charter of the Massachusetts Bay Colony also allowed for self-government, and its leaders propagated such democracy throughout the life of the colony.[223] Jamestown was undoubtedly the first, if not the most radical, experiment with representative government on the North American continent, and had an influence on the other colonies to follow.

The legislative body that met at Jamestown helped to usher in a new era of colonial government, one in which people in the new world began to step out from under royal control and have a say in their own lives.[224] Varying forms of local government existed in England since Anglo-Saxon rule, so democratic leanings were not a completely radical concept.[225] In Jamestown's case, its citizens were far enough away from the king and the nobility that they

[219] Morison and Commager, 53.
[220] Ibid., 55.
[221] Price, *Love and Hate in Jamestown*, 19.
[222] Deetz, *The Times of Their Lives,* 20.
[223] Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England 1485-1714,* 193.
[224] Billings, *A Little Parliament*, xix.
[225] Heather Tanner, conversation with author, May 14, 2009.

were considerably freer to test the waters of representative government.[226] Nevertheless, the General Assembly lasted for 150 years and Virginia prospered under its administration.[227] More importantly, through the experiment with representative government, over time the Assemblymen gained valuable political experience and dabbled in resistance to royal oppression – characteristics that undoubtedly foreshadow the Virginian government's integral role in winning American independence more than a century later.[228] This is a legacy that is treasured and valued by Americans today, even when they often do not know where it all started.

Not only did Jamestown witness the beginnings of democracy on American soil, it also left a detailed historical record in the very soil itself. The fourth important aspect of Jamestown is the one that will probably have more to do with changing the long-held negative perceptions about the colony than anything else, and that is the archaeology presently being conducted at the James Fort site. It would be safe to assert that we would not know as much as we now do about what happened on a daily basis inside the walls of the triangular fort on the James River if it were not for the highly skilled team of archaeologists who have dedicated themselves to this project since 1994. Their discoveries have already radically changed many standard interpretations of the Jamestown story, and new finds continue to be uncovered every day. I experienced the archaeology at James Fort personally during the summer of 2008, when I participated in the Field School there for six weeks. During that relatively brief period of time, I helped uncover the Jamestown story literally from the ground up, and I witnessed firsthand how the archaeological record is turning the traditional negative views on their head.

Before delving into a description of the Jamestown dig, it is vital to understand the type of archaeology that takes place there. Archaeology in the basic sense of the word is a scientific

[226] Ibid.
[227] Wertenbaker, *Virginia Under the Stuarts*, 42.
[228] Ibid., 258-259.

discipline that studies prehistoric or historic peoples by means of the material culture they left behind. Historical archaeology does all of this, but adds to it an intense study of the written records and textual evidence from the appropriate period.[229] Essentially, historical archaeologists look for physical evidence and then compare what they find with the writings of people who knew or witnessed what took place.[230] Jamestown is particularly qualified for such an approach, considering the wealth of historical accounts written from and about the colony throughout its early years. It is through just such an integration of the archaeological and documentary evidence that the team at Jamestown has come to understand so much about daily life in the colony.

If, however, Dr. William Kelso had listened to common belief regarding the James Fort site, we still might not have any of the knowledge that has been gained from the archaeology there. For years, experts and park service employees alike assumed that any remains of Jamestown had been washed into the James River due to severe shoreline erosion.[231] But Dr. Kelso thought there was a chance that the fort site might still be there, so in 1994 he started the Jamestown Rediscovery Project, the goal of which was to find enough evidence in the ground to prove that the fort site remained intact.[232] Within two years, the Rediscovery Project had shown beyond a reasonable doubt that the James Fort site was still preserved.[233] The team learned that the fort was triangular in shape, one hundred by one hundred by 140 yards, with three long palisade trenches connected by three rounded bulwarks.[234] Within this surprisingly small space

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[229] Alan Mayne, "On the Edges of History: Reflections on Historical Archaeology," *American Historical Review* (February 2008): 97.
[230] Ivor Noel Hume, *The Virginia Adventure: Roanoke to Jamestown: An Archaeological and Historical Odyssey* (New York: Knopf, 1994), xxvii.
[231] Ivor Noel Hume, *Here Lies Virginia: An Archaeologist's View of Colonial Life and History* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 40.
[232] Pecoraro and Givens, " 'Like to perish,' " 3.
[233] Kelso, *Buried Truth,* 76.
[234] Ibid., 75-76.

the Rediscovery Project has already discovered over one million artifacts, each of which has a story to tell.

One interesting twist on the traditional Jamestown story has come with the finding of a plethora of Indian artifacts within the fort context. Some of the artifacts confirm that the hostility between the groups was real – broken projectile points or "arrowheads" are evidence of the Englishmen's armor doing its job well.[235] One Jamestown account describes an encounter between the English and Paspaheghs, one of the Powhatan tribes, in which a colonist deflected a native arrow and "burst [it] all to pieces."[236] Violent interactions such as this were not uncommon, but archaeological evidence is revealing that there were many peaceful encounters as well. Deer bones with native-style butcher marks indicate a gift or trade of food.[237] Indian pottery could either be evidence of giving or trade, or even of Powhatan men and women living temporarily inside James Fort.[238] A profusion of European beads and copper alloy scrap, both of which were common trade items, continue to be found at the site.[239] All of these artifacts speak to a significant native presence as part of the early Jamestown experience, both in hostile and peaceful manners.

The archaeology has not only shed light on Indian relations, it has also given us a glimpse into what daily life was like in James Fort. High percentages of locally made ceramics around the site indicate that the Jamestonians adapted to a recurring lack of supplies and began making

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[235] Helen C. Rountree and E. Randolph Turner III, *Before and After Jamestown: Virginia's Powhatans and Their Predecessors (*Orlando: University Press of Florida, 2002), 127. During my time in Field School, projectile points were such a common find that the two teams working within the Fort held a competition as to who could find the most during the six weeks.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid., 128.
[238] Ibid., 130-133.
[239] Ibid., 133-139. When I was at Jamestown, we found multiple examples of both of these artifacts. One bead that was particularly interesting was called a Venetian chevron bead. It was made in Italy from various colors of glass in a geometric pattern. Such a bead would have been highly in demand for the Powhatans. Copper scrap, another prominent trade item, was also a common find during Field School. We usually found it in thin strips like ribbons.

their own vessels and pipes.[240] When the ceramics unearthed are European, we can learn what types the people at Jamestown were using and where they came from. There are dozens of different kinds of ceramics found at James Fort, originating from a variety of locations. To cite only a few examples, Borderware comes from the English-Scottish border, Frechen stoneware comes from central Germany, and olive jars come from Spain.[241] This variety indicates international commercial systems within Europe, as well as the homelands of many of the colonists themselves.[242] The list of other types of artifacts that are being found within the fort site is staggering – jewelry, medicinal and surgical supplies, coins, sewing supplies, animal bones, armor, weapons, and tools to name only a few.[243]

Perhaps the most profound and poignant evidence that is being uncovered at Jamestown is that of the colonists themselves, whose remains give the rest of the seventeenth-century material culture its full meaning. A number of early graves at Jamestown have been exhumed and the remains studied closely. These colonists, though dead for four hundred years, still speak to us – the archaeological analysis of the human remains at Jamestown has revealed information about the colonists' sex, stature, diet, age, ancestry, health, occupation, and other characteristics.[244] The human record at James Fort is a useful and even necessary reminder of

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[240] Pecoraro and Givens, " 'Like to perish,' " 7, 10, 12-13. Ceramics began to be produced locally at Jamestown with the arrival of Robert Cotton, a tobacco pipe maker, in the Second Supply in January 1608. His pipes are found frequently at James Fort, and are identified by a distinctive fleur-de-lis pattern that was Cotton's "maker's mark."

[241] Bly Straube, unpublished lecture (Jamestown, Virginia, June 13, 2008). The seventeenth-century ceramics were the artifacts I most enjoyed working with. Borderware usually has a green glaze. Frechen is brown stoneware that is salt-glazed, giving it a pockmarked appearance.

[242] Ibid.

[243] Ibid. During Field School we unearthed all of these types of artifacts. To cite only a few interesting examples, we found Irish and Dutch coins; English tavern tokens; countless straight pins from an excavated hearth; a wide variety of animal remains; knives and gun parts; and various farm implements.

[244] Jamie May, unpublished lecture (Jamestown, Virginia, July 3, 2008). We did not exhume any human graves during Field School, but we did encounter their remains nonetheless. This happened because we were excavating the Confederate earthworks raised during the Civil War on top of the seventeenth-century site. Our task was to level the earthworks and reach the Fort-period soil. Because the Confederate soldiers constructed the earthworks by digging through seventeenth-century ground, they chopped up many early graves in the process. As we dug through the Civil War layers, we came across some splintered bone fragments from human skeletons.

the fact that Jamestown was not a sterile, stoic environment or a remote moment mentioned in passing in the dusty pages of a history textbook. The true meaning of the colony is a tale of human struggle, one in which people lived and died and sealed their place on the new continent. These people created an innovative market economy in the face of multiple obstacles. They legally protected their property rights and forged a representative government body in the midst of hardships. These achievements directly influenced other colonial ventures to come. Yet with all that we have learned about the Jamestonians, it seems as if we are only just beginning to scratch the surface of their stories.

Conclusion

The 400th Anniversary and Beyond

Virginia's state capital was moved from Jamestown to Williamsburg in 1699 after the statehouse at Jamestown burned.[245] The once bustling port city known as "James Cittie" declined significantly with this move, and by the eighteenth century most of Jamestown Island was plantation farmland.[246] There was little to attract any sort of visitor to Jamestown as it was in the 1700s and 1800s – the crumbling remains of the brick church tower were the only visible vestiges of the original settlement. There were several commemorations of the anniversary of the first landing, a bicentennial in 1807 and a 250th celebration in 1857.[247] But it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that Jamestown began to emerge back into the nation's historical consciousness.

The turn of the century saw several developments that brought Jamestown back into the foreground. One was the establishment of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA) in 1889, one of the oldest and most respected preservationist groups in the nation.[248] The APVA purchased twenty-two and a half acres at Jamestown, conducted early archaeological excavations, and constructed the seawall along the James River to prevent shoreline erosion.[249] APVA members viewed their Jamestown acreage as sacred, and initiated pilgrimages to the site to commemorate the early settlers.[250] This was the development of a unique tradition – the early 1900s saw many such pilgrimages to historical sites like Jamestown,

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[245] Ivor Noel Hume, *The Virginia Adventure: Roanoke to Jamestowne, An Archaeological and Historical Odyssey* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 396.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Ivor Noel Hume, *Here Lies Virginia: An Archaeologist's View of Colonial Life and History* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 72.
[248] Noel Hume, *Virginia Adventure,* 395.
[249] Ibid., 395, 398.
[250] Ibid., 396.

its travelers imbued with a deep sense of respecting the hallowed ground and reverencing the "altars of our past."[251] Jamestown thus came to be viewed essentially as a shrine, which created an intriguing contrast to the other developments of the same period, which were pushing Jamestown further to the background in favor of the Pilgrims.

The second development at the turn of the century that rekindled interest in Jamestown was the 300th anniversary in 1907. A seven-month exposition was held at nearby Norfolk, Virginia, which focused on paying homage to the past.[252] An abundance of fireworks and the presence of President Teddy Roosevelt highlighted the celebration.[253] These festivities were well received, and fed directly into the promotion fifty years later for the 350th anniversary. The 350th was highly publicized, particularly as a moment in which Virginia and the south at large could step out from beneath the shadow of Plymouth's preeminence and promote Jamestown's historical primacy.[254] Virginia seemingly spared no expense in trying to make this a reality. The Jamestown Festival Park was constructed within view of the fort's original site, complete with a rebuilt James Fort, a Powhatan village, and replicas of the three ships the first colonists arrived on in the spring of 1607.[255] The Festival Park was intended solely for the anniversary celebration, but the enthusiasm of the public has kept it from demolition indefinitely – it still operates today as the Jamestown Settlement, which sometimes draws tourists away from the colony's original site but certainly has much to offer in the way of educational opportunities.[256]

All of this brings the story of Jamestown up to the present day. The year 2007 was cast as "America's 400th Anniversary," with festivities beginning long before that. The previous

[251] Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1991).
[252] Ibid., 145.
[253] Noel Hume, *Here Lies Virginia,* 72.
[254] Kammen, *Mystic Chords,* 549.
[255] Noel Hume, *Virginia Adventure*, xxvii.
[256] Ibid.

year, a replica of the Jamestown-bound ship the *Godspeed* launched an 80-day sail with multiple ports of call; exhibits were expanded at the newly renovated Jamestown Settlement; and a forum on the future of democracy was held at Williamsburg, paying tribute to the first representative government in North America that met at Jamestown.[257] When the weekend of May 13, 2007, arrived, a plethora of entertainment, programs, ceremonies, and exhibits attended by dignitaries from around the world marked the anniversary of the day four hundred years earlier that saw 104 wary but hope-filled men and boys disembark at the inconspicuous point of land along the James River.[258] President George W. Bush visited the James Fort site on May 13 and watched in awe as the Jamestown Rediscovery archaeologists uncovered a sword hilt right before his eyes.[259] "So this takes place every day?" he questioned in disbelief, speaking of the active digging occurring at Jamestown.[260] Queen Elizabeth II of England also played tourist in Virginia, visiting Jamestown with Prince Philip on May 4 and marveling over the millions of artifacts found at the site.[261]

Could all of these recent events indicate that Jamestown is making a comeback? Could it be that Plymouth and the Pilgrim story are no longer the only images that spring to mind when America's colonial history is discussed? Certainly Jamestown still has a lot of ground to make up thanks to the centuries of debilitating literature focusing on its failings rather than its triumphs; however, there are hopeful signs. The United States naturalization test was recently updated, sparking debate as to whether the new wording of questions is more difficult than the previous test. One of the altered questions now reads, "What is one reason colonists came to

[257] "Recap of America's 400th Anniversary Events." http://www.jamestown2007.org.
[258] Ibid.
[259] "President Bush Celebrates Jamestown's 400th Anniversary." May 13, 2007. http://www.foxnews.com.
[260] Ibid.
[261] "Queen Elizabeth II Visits Historic Jamestowne." May 4, 2007. http://www.historicjamestowne.org.

America?" as opposed to the older "Why did the Pilgrims come to America?"[262] This seems to indicate that people are starting to think more broadly about our colonial heritage, rather than boxing in the Pilgrims and boxing out anything else.

I have argued in this paper that there is an obvious disparity in the ways that Jamestown and Plymouth are treated, both in historical literature and in our collective American consciousness. This disparity favors the seemingly morally upstanding, myth-filled story of the Pilgrims, and relegates Jamestown to the background of our history. Jamestown has come to be labeled a failure, and four primary criticisms of the colony are continually propagated in this vein – its poor location, its inept relations with the natives, the laziness of its colonists, and its high death rates. I have argued that the American Civil War contributed to the creation of Jamestown's dismal reputation, with the victorious North and its Pilgrim legend gaining the upper hand over Virginia's Jamestown origins. It is my contention that in order to change the ingrained negative perceptions of Jamestown, the colony must be understood as a venture that eventually *succeeded*, not as a venture that experienced close brushes with failure. I concluded, based on extensive research, that none of the four primary criticisms of Jamestown are completely valid. Furthermore, an understanding of the important but often overlooked characteristics of Jamestown – its market economy, its private property rights, its representative government, and the current archaeology at the site – is key to reshaping a more positive image of Jamestown.

It may take just as long to change the long-held opinions about Jamestown's story as it took to cement them in our history, our culture, and our minds; but by understanding where the negative views come from, and the new archaeological evidence, there is hope that Jamestown may yet take its rightful place as not only the first permanent English settlement in North

[262] CNN, Clarkston, GA, October 2, 2008.

America, but as the birthplace and beginning of much of what we value about the United States of America as it exists today.

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